

The American Negro Exhibit At the Paris Exposition.

I am asked by the editor of the Colored American to tell the complete story of the American Negro Exhibit. No task could be more pleasant, for I believe the Negroes of the United States should have the fullest information about this project which has gone abroad in their name and in their name has demanded and received a hearing in the great concourse of Nations that have met here in Paris to congratulate each other upon the progress of the nineteenth century. The American Negro may not have established an independent government, and he may be lacking in all the paraphernalia of royalty, but his progress has been no less marked in civilization, and any just consideration of its marvelous progress falls far short of the truth if it puts him down as a zero, unless that zero multiplies by ten.

At the opening of this century the Constitution of the United States was still in swaddling clothes, the slave trade was in all its vigor and horrors of the "middle passage," and in practically every State in the Union the crack of the slave whip might have been heard. The great American Constitution, which has been characterized by William Lloyd Garrison as "A cov-

every white woman exposed, and a drug in civilized society. This information has come to them through the horrible libels that have gone abroad whenever a Negro is lynched, and by the constant references to us by the press in discouraging remarks.

The social and political economists of the Old World put down the erroneous accounts of such cases as that of Sam Hose as truth, and, not reading the further disclosures, reach conclusions which do us harm.

How shall we answer these slanders? Our newspapers they do not subscribe for, if we publish books they do not buy them, if we lecture they do not attend. To the Paris Exposition, however, thousands upon



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thousands of them will go and a well selected and prepared exhibit representing the Negro's development in his churches, his schools, his homes, his farms, his stores, his professions and pursuits in general will attract attention, as did the exhibits at Atlanta and Nashville Expositions, and do a great and lasting good in convincing thinking people of the possibilities of the Negro.

Not only will foreigners be impressed, but hundreds of white Americans will be far more convinced by what they see there than what they see, or can see, every day in this country, but fail to give us credit for. Hundreds of white people were amazed at the evidences of culture and progress they saw in the Negro Exhibits in Nashville and Atlanta, and yet you know that if they would only visit the churches and the homes of our best families in those cities alone they would see an exhibit far more pronounced of the progress and culture of the race. But this they do not, and we must prove our cause in other ways.

Please write me your views, to be used in presenting the matter to the Commission.

Very truly yours,
THOMAS J. CALLOWAY.



THOMAS J. CALLOWAY.

enant with death and an agreement with hell," had sanctioned forever the ownership of human property and thus to deny the truth of its own statement that "men are created equal." Let us not refer to the terrible blasphemy in which slave sympathizing preachers proved by Apostle Paul's epistles the holiness of slavery, nor to the great chivalry of the South which made concubines of our illiterate, helpless mothers. This will be too much, and the picture is complete without it. Suffice it to say that the century closes in beautiful contrast, and from the four corners of the Nation Negroes have sent here to the Universal Exposition proofs of progress in manhood, womanhood, education, industry and all the evidences of good citizenship.

PRELIMINARY WORK

So far as I know the first effort to have a separate exhibit in connection with the general exhibit of the United States was made by myself in the following letter sent to over one hundred representative Negroes in various sections of the United States:

Washington, D. C., October 4, 1899.

My Dear Sir:

I am compiling arguments to present to the management of the United States Exhibit at the Paris Exposition to persuade the managers to provide for a Negro Exhibit in connection with the United States Exhibit at that exhibition during the next year. The principal argument I hope to use is that the leading members of our race desire it. For securing a statement from you I address you in this letter. While I deplore as deeply as any other member of my race, the matter of drawing the color line at any time where it is not already drawn by the other race, there are times, and this is one, when we owe it to ourselves to go before the world as Negroes. Every one who knows about public opinion in Europe will tell you that the Europeans think us a mass of rapists, ready to attack



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rect many false impressions concerning us which it is injurious to the United States should be entertained by foreigners.

T. THOMAS FORTUNE.

Normal, Ala., Oct. 8, 1899.

I think a Negro Exhibit will not only benefit the Negro, but reflect credit upon the United States as showing to the world the wonderful transformation of 4,000,000 barbarians and ignorant slaves to industrious Christian citizens. No other country or period of time has seen the like.

Yours truly,

W. H. COUNCILL.

New Orleans, La., Oct. 16, 1899.

Dear Sir:

I favor making such an exhibit at the Paris Exhibition as will indicate to the civilized world that the American Negro is making an honest and successful effort to overcome the many disadvantages under which he has labored hitherto.

Yours truly,

I. B. SCOTT.

Atlanta, Ga., Oct. 6, 1899.

My Dear Sir:

It will be a tangible object lesson to the civilized world that the Negro is not as bad as it has been represented through a prejudiced press. Respectfully,

L. H. HOLSEY.

Washington, D. C., Oct. 7, 1899.

Dear Sir:

Unless the Negro is specifically mentioned he is left out by tacit understanding. This exposition will furnish a splendid opportunity for the race to make a creditable showing before the world. Yours truly,

KELLY MILLER.

Wilberforce, Ohio, Oct. 19, 1899.

Dear Sir:

Your communication received and the contents noted. I am hearty in favor of representation at the Paris Exposition. I am willing to do anything that I can to forward the movement to have our sons and daughters represented in the World's Exposition.

Yours,

BENJAMIN W. ARNETT.

Washington, D. C., Oct. 18, 1899.

Dear Sir:

The effort you are making to provide for a Negro Exhibit at the Paris Exhibit is laudable, and should be encouraged by every man and woman identified with the race. In this way alone can the evidences of our progress be made a living, breathing reality not only to Europeans, but to many Americans, who know almost nothing of the strides the Negro has made in literature and in art, as well as in the various industries and trades.

MARY CHURCH TERRELL.

These united appeals were laid before Commissioner-General Peck and Director Howard J. Rogers, Depart-



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ment of Education and Social Economy. The reply was favorable and I was asked to state the plans and scope of the proposed exhibit.

PRESIDENT MCKINLEY INTERESTED.

In the meantime President McKinley had become interested. Mr. Booker T. Washington made a personal visit to the President on behalf of the movement, and he was seconded by Messrs. Lyons, Chatham and White. The result was that the President became deeply interested, and after a consultation between the President and the Commissioner General, I was told that the exhibit had been arranged for and I had been selected to carry out the plans. It was not till November 15th that I received my commission, and there remained just five months to collect, transport 3,500 miles across the ocean and install in a foreign land an exhibit that was to reflect credit upon nine million people scattered over 45 States and distributed in every line of occupation common to white Americans. It is hardly necessary to say that I shuddered at my task, and wondered if all my efforts had not been merely to put a drowning weight around my own neck.

"TO MAKE BRICKS WITHOUT STRAW."

The first difficulty to arise was the matter of funds. I was told that funds were so scarce that I could not be paid a salary of a clerkship, and any other expenses must be limited to such personal traveling as I should be specifically authorized to do. I was allowed a stenographer for 60 days and was permitted to have an office in the cellar of the Capital Savings Bank. It was in this connection that Congressman George Henry White came to the rescue. He introduced in Congress a bill appropriating fifteen thousand dol-

lars for the Negro Exhibit. This bill was indorsed by President McKinley, Commissioner-General Peck, every member of Appropriations Committee, both Republicans and Democrats, and passed, without a single objectionable vote in either House of Congress. My salary was fixed at \$2,400 per annum, and every expense which I have found it desirable to incur has been met, and yet half of the fund is yet to be expended, most of which will go to publish a book containing in great detail the facts brought out in the exhibit and which I hope to place, free of charge, upon the desks of every newspaper editor in America, in every library, upon the table of every member of Congress, in all the universities and colleges for both races, and among our own leaders and thinkers everywhere. As its preparation entails great care it will be several months before it can be distributed.

PLAN OF THE EXHIBIT.

To return now to the thread of my story: When my commission came on November 15th I left that night under orders to proceed to Albany, New York, and receive instructions from Director Rogers. I wish to say now that of all men in life I have worked with I have never had quite so satisfactory dealings as with Mr. Rogers, and I wish the colored people in every part of the United States to know that had it not been for the hearty co-operation of this Christian gentleman the American Negro Exhibit would have been a farce. The plans which I outlined to him were adopted as the proper scope, and were the basis of whatever we have collected. They have been published in The Colored American, and some of your readers will possibly recall them. Immediately from Albany I left for a conference visit to five of our typical institutions for special educational exhibits. Time was too short and space entirely too limited to attempt to collect exhibits from our 180 institutions, hence I selected Fisk University, in Tennessee, Atlantic University in Georgia, Howard University in Washington, Hampton Institute in Virginia and Tuskegee Institute in Alabama as the fitting institutions from which to ask exhibits. Howard, because it was our only National school, and the largest, Atlanta, because of its special work in sociology, and Fisk because of its higher education; Hampton, as the father of industrial education, and Tuskegee, because of all that it stands for and is doing in practical education and common-sense agitation. These institutions responded with alacrity, and by December 1st I had established an office, and Miss Carrie E. Lewis had accepted the work of stenographer and typewriter, which she did with great credit.

A FEW OF THOSE WHO HELPED.

The further planning of the exhibit was not so easy. Institutions have treasuries which can be drawn upon for public good when necessary, but individuals among us are not usually so well supplied. One of the first to volunteer his services was Mr. Daniel Murray, of the Library of Congress, who has labored late at night and with great expense of time in collecting the information which has resulted in the magnificent collection of "Negro Authors." It is not often we find men who without compensation will devote themselves so earnestly for the benefit of the race. In this category I must also include Mr. Andrew F. Hilger, who collected information of industrial progress of the race; Major Christian E. Fleetwood, who gathered material showing Medal of Honor Negroes; Mr. James L. Niell, who gathered statistics about clerks in departmental service; Mr. Robert H. Harper, of Chicago, who gathered valuable material showing progress of colored people in that city; Bishop Lee, who began the collection of facts relative to what the Negro is doing for himself in his churches and schools, but which, unfortunately, he could not finish, and the editor of The Colored American, Mr. E. E. Cooper, who furnished two beautifully bound volumes of Negro newspapers. I reserve for special mention the "Georgia Negro," a social study by Prof. W. E. Burghardt DuBois, Ph.D.

To pass over the uninteresting details of the working out of the exhibit, it was March 7, 1900, that Mrs. Calloway, our little girls Lucile and Caro-